

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

BREAKING BARRIERS BY BREAKING THE ICE

It goes without saying that getting to know your students is important for positive classroom discipline. There are many ways to find out what you need to know about them as quickly as you can. Some of the more traditional ways are by going through student permanent records, contacting parents, and talking with other teachers who have already taught your new students.

One of the best ways to get to know your students, however, is by observing them as they get to know each other. A classroom where students know each other well and value the contributions that each one can make is a classroom where many obstacles to success just don't exist.

Don't assume that your students know each other, even though they may tell you that they've grown up together. To create a positive learning climate, instill in your students the sense that they are all members of the same team. At the same time, your teacher's "radar" can be actively trying to find out as much as you can about your new students.

To do this, you will need to design activities that get your students to share information and collaborate in a positive way while you learn as much about them as you can. If you want to break some of the barriers to a successful discipline environment in your class, try some of these activities.

1. Be sure to spend time at the start of the term assigning the classroom duties and responsibilities that your students can take care of for the good of all.
2. Take photographs of your students and post them.
3. Ask those students who claim they already know each other well to write out 20 facts about each other for you to read.
4. Put your students into pairs to determine ten things they all have in common. You can make many activities from this simple activity depending on the ability level of your students. Go beyond the obvious to deal with the mental traits they share, past experiences, future goals, problems, successful attitudes, or whatever traits you want to focus on at the moment.
5. Make it a point to focus on your students' strengths by asking them to reveal what they do well. (Too often we focus on what they lack.) You will be pleasantly surprised at the skills your students already possess.
6. Have students bring in magazine pictures and words that indicate things that are of value to them. Combine these into a giant collage that shows how your students can be different yet still part of the whole.

7. After you have met with your students for a few days, assign each one to a permanent study team. This group will watch out for each other all year. When you review, this is the group that will work together. They should exchange phone numbers so that absent students know who to call to get missing notes and assignments. The possible tasks that study teams can perform in your class are limited only by what you choose for them to do based on their maturity and ability. This technique is a positive way for students to support each other while focusing on the study skills needed for success in school. Don't be afraid to switch students if the chemistry in a group is not working.
8. Create an interview project. Have students interview each other at the start of the class. Some of the questions might be:
My greatest asset is _____
The nicest thing I ever did for anyone was _____
The nicest thing anyone ever did for me was _____
One question I have about life is _____
One thing I have always wondered about is _____
My teachers last year will tell you that I am _____
My friends will tell you that I am _____
People like me because _____
One thing most people don't know about me is _____
I want to know more about _____
Five years from now I will _____
A famous person I admire is _____ because _____
The bravest thing I ever did was _____

Source: Discipline Survival Kit for the Secondary Teacher, Julia Thompson, The Center for Applied Research in Education, <http://www.phdirect.com>
Available on a loan basis from Career and Technical Education Resources, 1-800-392-7217 or <http://www.cater.missouri.edu/>

HOW TO MAKE YOUR STUDENTS PAY ATTENTION TO YOU

Don't talk unless you have everyone's attention

Wait until you have everyone's attention before you address the class. Establish a signal with your students so that they know they are to stop what they are doing and listen to you. This can be an expression such as "May I have your attention, please" or another signal such as a place in the room where you go when you need to speak to the entire group. It's not enough to just establish this procedure, you have to teach it to your class and then consistently reinforce it.

Don't repeat yourself

Say something once and teach your students to listen to you the *first* time. Take the time and teach listening skills throughout the term so that your students can develop them. Make this a part of the culture of your classroom and you will find yourself not having to repeat.

Don't forget your audience

Recall those public speaking tips from your undergraduate speech 101 class and apply them. Videotape yourself or simply record your voice. Study your presentation to make sure you are reaching your audience. If you give your students work to do while you are speaking that will force them to interact with you, then you can be sure of engaging their attention. A handout with key words missing or with outlined notes to complete will encourage students to stay on track while you are speaking.

Don't assume that your students are ready to listen just because you are ready to speak

Wait. Allow your students to get their notebook pages and other materials ready before you begin talking to them. If you just want them to listen, and not write, ask them to clear their desks of all materials. Set the stage if you want to capture their attention.

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EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

If you want to have effective discipline be sure to:

- * Say what you really mean
- * Attack the behavior, not the student
- * Treat students with respect
- * Insist on students treating you with respect
- * Involve parents whenever possible
- * Be consistent
- * Document
- * Avoid emotional discipline, scolding, lecturing, sarcasm and public apologies
- * Let students know what you expect
- * Expect appropriate behavior
- * Praise students whenever possible
- * Look for the best in each student
- * Communicate
- * Take as much time to send home positive notes and make positive phone calls as you do negative ones

Effective Discipline Requires a Plan

Have a seating chart

Learn the names of all students as soon as possible

Decide on some basic rules and standards for your class

Decide on consequences for not following the rules

Decide on rewards for following the rules

HOW TO AVOID THE MOST COMMON DISCIPLINE MISTAKES

1. Never confront a student in front of an entire class. You will create a disruption that will upset everyone who watches. The misbehaving student will tend to act even worse in an effort to avoid greater embarrassment.
2. Do not lose your temper. When you lose your temper, you place yourself on the same level as your unruly student.
3. Never order an angry student to comply with your demands. You will get nowhere.
4. Do not punish a group for the misbehavior of some. This does not create the kind of positive peer pressure that will cause students to behave well. Instead it will generate anger.
5. Don't let poor behavior affect a student's grade. You should assess a student's progress in learning with a grade, not by his or her misbehavior.
6. Do not be confrontational. Help your student save face in front of peers. Backing a student into an emotional corner will only hurt the student.
7. Do not let the intensity of a situation strip you of your objectivity. Remain calm and keep your thoughts collected no matter how frustrated you may be with a student.
8. Don't waste your time trying to prove that you are right and your students are wrong. Instead of this time-consuming impossible task, spend your energy on finding a solution to the problem you and your students are having.
9. Be careful not to create win/lose situations with your students. Consequences should not cause your students to feel they have lost yet another confrontation with authority.
10. Don't take student misbehavior personally. Your students do not regard you in the same way that you regard yourself or that you regard other adults. Distance yourself emotionally from their misdeeds and remain as objective as possible.
11. Don't punish in anger. Calm down and find a solution instead.
12. Don't argue with students. This only wastes time and energy that can be put to better use. Stay focused on correcting the problems you and your students are having.

13. Don't assign work as punishment. Sentences to write, definitions to copy, and extra homework will promote a negative attitude towards school work and learning.
14. Don't make deals with your students to convince them to behave better. Enforce your rules instead.
15. Be as consistent as you can. The consistent enforcement of class rules and expectations will prevent many problems.
16. Don't ignore a small problem that can quickly turn into a much more serious one.
17. Don't be too quick to send a student to an administrator. You will be more effective if you handle your own problems as often as you can.
18. Don't remain angry at a student. Once the situation has been settled, the student needs some reason to put forth the effort to behave. Knowing that you will remain angry will not encourage students to try.
19. Don't forget to tell students what they need to do to improve their behavior. It's not enough just to tell them to stop. You should also tell them what they need to do to get on the path to success.
20. Don't go straight to severe negative consequences without a build-up of penalties for escalating misbehavior. Follow the plan you established when you posted your class rules.
21. Make sure your rules are clearly spelled out for your students.
22. Don't prolong a bad situation by acting incorrectly or by refusing to act. Be prompt in dealing with misbehavior. You don't need to discuss a situation for very long to get your point across.
23. Don't try to scare students into behaving well. It doesn't work.
24. Don't label your students in a negative way. Their behavior may be bad, but they are not bad people.

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ASK PARENTS FOR ASSISTANCE

Include parents and ask for their help.

When you contact parents make sure:

- ✓ speak positively and clearly, stressing the fact that you know that the parents are equally concerned and will want to work with you in resolving the problem with their child
- ✓ stay on track, requesting exactly what you want from them; be specific about the problem behavior
- ✓ have time and dates ready so that you know when you can meet with them
- ✓ don't get defensive, hostile, or blame the parent
- ✓ don't apologize for bothering the parent
- ✓ don't minimize the problem ("I probably shouldn't have called, etc..")
- ✓ don't minimize the consequences of the behavior; tell what the consequences will be
- ✓ language is important; communicate your concern
- ✓ have the facts ready before you meet or call
 - give the inappropriate behavior; plus all documentation records
 - what you did and said
 - what you want from the parents
 - times and dates that you can meet

SAMPLE DISCIPLINE PLAN

Class Rules

1. Follow directions the first time they are given.
2. Raise hand and wait to be recognized before speaking.
3. Use appropriate language.
4. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
5. Be in your seat with all your materials when the bell rings.

If a student breaks a rule, the following consequences will occur:

First offense. . . WARNING

Second offense. . . REMAIN AFTER CLASS

Third offense. . . DETENTION

Fourth offense. . . PARENTAL CONTACT

Fifth offense. . . REMOVE FROM CLASS

I have read and understand the Discipline Plan for Mrs. Sorg's classroom.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Home Telephone Number _____

Mother's Name _____ Phone (Day) _____

Father's Name _____ Phone (Day) _____

In case of emergency contact: Name _____

Phone _____